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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1988 the South Carolina exit examination will be administered for the first time to determine if tenth-grade students will receive a regular diploma when they graduate from high school. School districts will be required by the Education Improvement Act to provide remediation to students who do not pass the exit examination, and these students will have three additional opportunities to take and pass the test. Concern exists that failing the test, particularly on the second administration, may serve as a disincentive for continued school attendance. School districts with relatively high dropout rates can act now to reduce their potential for increased dropouts following the exit examination. Districts can employ the following strategies: (1) self-assessment of school-based factors contributing to students' dropping out; (2) identification of students not likely to pass the test; (3) identification of demographic characteristics common to dropouts followed by development of appropriate outreach activities; (4) provision of remediation in skills the examination will test; (5) delivery of more frequent performance feedback to students and parents; (6) assignment of teachers and counselors to give special attention to those students at risk of failing the examination or of dropping out; and (7) development of a plan to keep students in school who do not pass the examination. (A chart identifying South Carolina school districts which need to take extraordinary initiatives to prevent the potential of increased dropouts following the exit examination is included.) (ABL)

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Notes Accompanying the Chart, "The Identification of School Districts Which Need to Take Extraordinary Initiatives to Prevent the Potential for Increased Dropouts Following the Administration of the 1988 'Exit Exam'"

In the spring of 1988 the South Carolina exit exam will be administered for the first time to determine if tenth grade students will receive a regular diploma when they graduate from high school. School districts are required by the Education Improvement Act to provide remediation to students who do not pass the exit exam, and these students will have three additional opportunities to take and pass the exam. Students who never succeed in passing the exam will not receive a regular high school diploma.

The attached charts are intended to stimulate discussion and analysis of the likelihood that in certain school districts that already have dropout rates among the highest in the state, students who fail the 1988 tenth grade "exit exam" will be more likely to drop out of school than will similarly situated students in other school districts.

This concern is based on the assumption that in districts with relatively high dropout rates in the tenth and/or eleventh grades there are institutional, environmental, or cultural dynamics which are partly responsible for the high percentage of dropouts. These factors are so powerful that, in combination with students' own problems, they cause some school districts to have

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in the state. It is further assumed that in these districts a student's failure on the exit exam, particularly upon the second administration of the exam when the student is in the eleventh grade, will create a disincentive for continued school attendance.

Readers are cautioned that the accompanying charts are not intended to be absolutely predictive. Since the collection of data used in the attached charts districts may have taken actions to remedy high dropout rates or improve student performance on the exit exam. In spite of a school district's past performance there is still time between now and the first administration of the exit exam in the spring of 1988 for school districts to act to reduce the potential for increased dropouts following the exit exam. This can be done in any of the following ways:

(1) Districts can conduct a self-assessment to identify school based factors that may contribute to decisions of low achieving students to drop out of school, and then the districts can act to make changes to reduce or eliminate these factors.

(2) Districts can identify the students most likely not to pass the exit exam, inform them and their parents that they are in danger of not passing the exam, and emphasize the need for these students to devote serious attention to their studies.

(3) Districts can identify demographic characteristics that may be common to these students and then develop outreach initiatives based on these characteristics. For example, it may be found that the students come from a particular neighborhood or community. A district might enlist the support of churches or community organizations, or individuals from them, to tutor the students, or to otherwise provide them with support. Or it may be discovered that the students have other common characteristics which may make it easier to target the students for attention, or which may indicate the presence of basic problems that should be addressed.

(4) Districts can make sure that these students receive remediation designed to teach the basic skills the exit exam will test.

(5) Districts can make sure that these students, and their parents, receive more frequent feedback concerning the students' weekly classroom performance, attitude, and attendance.

(6) Districts can, in addition to providing remediation during the regular school day, also offer remedial classes after school, on Saturdays, or during the summer.

(7) Districts can assign selected teachers and counselors to give special attention to students who are most at risk of not passing the exit exam <u>and</u> at risk of dropping out of school. The teachers and counselors can provide these students with support and encouragement, closely monitor the students' performance, and alert appropriate school officials to students' special problems or needs.

(8) Districts can develop an action plan designed to keep in school the students who do not pass the exit exam in the spring of 1988. Components of this plan can include targeting these students for incentives, special attention from teachers and counselors, closely monitoring the students' attendance, designing a special curriculum for the students, providing employability development and vocational training for these students, providing regularly scheduled individual and group counseling for these students, and actively linking these students to appropriate services provided by community agencies.

How to Read the Attached Charts

Each column in the first chart provides a list of twenty-five percent of the school districts in South Carolina which have the worst performance in the area described by the heading of each column. The chart uses information from various sources to identify districts where a confluence between high dropout rates and other factors indicate that dropouts may increase following the administration of the exit exam. If a district appears in Columns 1 or 2 and in one of the other columns, that district should take action to prevent the potential increase in dropouts following the administration of the exit exam.

The second chart is based on the first chart. It lists only those districts in Column 1 or 2 which also appear in at least one of the other columns.

Readers should be aware that a district may have a high dropout rate in a particular grade, but because of the small size of the district relatively few students may have dropped out. For example, while 11.9% of the eleventh graders in Lexington #4 dropped out last year that accounted for 12 students. Because of this phenomenon, the chart includes Column 5 which lists the districts with the largest numbers of students that did not pass the tenth grade field test of the reading exit exam. It is assumed if one of these districts is listed in Column 1 or 2 and in Column 4 it is possible that district may have significant numbers of students who will drop out of school after the exit exam.

Readers should also be aware that the districts with relatively high percentages of dropouts vary from year to year. From one year to the next districts may appear, disappear, and reappear among the list of districts with the highest dropout rates at a particular grade level. It is also true, however, that some districts consistently rank among those districts with the highest percentage of dropouts at particular grade levels.

It should be noted that a few districts do not appear on the chart with other high dropout rate districts because while they are among the districts with the highest dropout rates among ninth graders, their tenth and eleventh grade dropout rates are not among the highest in the state. Charleston is the most

prominent example. During the last three school years its ninth grade dropout rates have been 11.9%, 8.2%, and 8.2% respectively. But during this past school year its tenth and eleventh grade dropout rates were 5.4% and 5.7% respectively. Another example is Aiken, where during the past two years its ninth grade dropout rates were 8.1% and 6.8%, but last year its dropouts rates for the tenth and eleventh grades were 5.5% and 5.6%. Also during the past two years Hampton #2 had a dropout rate of 9.3% and 6.6% among ninth graders, but this year the dropout rate was only 3.7% and 1.3% among tenth and eleventh graders.

Two districts which do appear on the chart also were among districts with the highest percentage of ninth grade dropouts. This has been case with Florence #1 and Georgetown for each of the past three years.

Finally, as is always the case where not all districts are listed, some districts fell immediately below the cutoff point for Columns 1 and 2 and for each of the other columns. Readers may want to refer to the source documents to determine the relative position of a specific district not listed on this chart.

Sources:

Column 1,
Column 2: "Total Dropouts As A Percent of Total Enrollment, 1985-1986," South Carolina Department of Education Dropout Report, 1985-1986 (September 1986).

Column 3: Preliminary Report of the 1986 Basic Skills Assessment Program, South Carolina State Department of Education (August 1986).

Column 4,
Column 5: "Exit Examination Summary Roster: BSAP, 1986, Grade 10, By District," South Carolina State Department of Education.

Column 6: "Table 46 - Percent Change in Enrollment From Ninth Grade, 1981-82 to Twelfth Grade, 1984-1985, By School District," Rankings of the Counties and School Districts of South Carolina 1984-85, South Carolina State Department of Education.

-- Hayes Mizell
January, 1987

Concern: If a school district appears in Column 1 or 2 and in either Columns 3, 4, 5 or 6 that district may have one of the highest percentage or number of students, relative to other districts in the state, who will drop out of school after failing the 10th grade exit exam in 1988.

The Identification of School Districts Which Need to Take Extraordinary Initiatives to Prevent the Potential for Increased Dropouts Following the Administration of the 1988 'Exit Exam'

1 School districts with highest % of 10th graders dropping out of school, 1985-1986		2 School districts with highest % of 11th graders dropping out of school, 1985-1986		3 School districts with highest percentage of 8th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the BSAP test administered in Spring, 1986		4 School districts with highest percentage of 10th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the field test of the exit exam in Spring, 1986		5 School districts with largest number of 10th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the field test of the exit exam in Spring, 1986		6 School districts with highest percentage of 9th grade enrollment withdrawing from school before the end of the 12th grade, 1981-1982 to 1984-1985	
Fairfie.	15.4	Lexington #4	11.9	Florence #4	64.2	Clarendon #1	66.37	Greenville	757	Hampton #2	-66.2
Orangeb . #7	10.7	Orangeburg #3	10.9	Hampton #2	60.9	Hampton #2	60.00	Charleston	736	Florence #4	-61.5
Lancaste	9.9	Florence #1	9.3	Marion #3	56.4	Florence #4	56.58	Richland #1	606	Charleston	-46.6
Dillon	9.5	Fairfield	9.3	Jasper	52.5	McCormick	55.84	Berkeley	443	Dillon #3	-46.5
Florenc 3	9.2	Dorchester #2	9.2	Williamsburg	52.1	Marion #3	53.85	Aiken	415	Orangeburg #4	-44.0
York #3	9.1	Dillon #3	8.9	Dillon #2	52.0	Florence #3	52.65	Horry	331	Barnwell #45	-43.7
Cherokee	8.8	Spartanburg #1	8.9	McCormick	51.5	Orangeburg #3	52.58	Florence #1	283	Orangeburg #2	-42.7
Allenda.	8.6	Anderson #5	7.8	Marion #4	48.6	Orangeburg #7	51.22	Darlington	281	Williamsburg	-42.5
Spartanb g #7	8.2	Orangeburg #4	7.5	Dorchester #3	47.0	Marlboro	46.54	Anderson #5	250	Lexington #4	-42.0
Laurens 6	8.2	Bamberg #2	7.4	Bamberg #2	45.9	Calhoun	46.15	Georgetown	236	York #4	-42.0
Greenwoc #50	7.9	Colleton	7.4	Fairfield	45.5	Williamsburg	45.78	Beaufort	236	Marion #2	-42.0
Dillon #2	7.9	Florence #4	7.3	Florence #3	44.4	Fairfield	45.32	Lancaster	233	Orangeburg #1	-41.9
Pickens	7.8	Spartanburg #4	7.3	Orangeburg #3	44.0	Orangeburg #1	45.07	Williamsburg	233	Orangeburg #7	-40.9
Orangebu #6	7.6	Chester	7.0	Marlboro	43.5	Jasper	43.43	Greenwood #50	227	Chesterfield	-40.8
Spartanb g #5	7.5	Cherokee	7.0	Orangeburg #2	43.3	Bamberg #2	42.59	Chester	224	Darlington	-40.2
Edgefiel	7.4	Edgefield	7.0	Orangeburg #5	43.0	Allendale	42.04	York #3	220	Sumter #2	-38.9
Marion #2	7.4	Orangeburg #1	6.9	Calhoun	41.7	Bamberg #1	41.86	Sumter #2	208	Laurens #55	-38.8
Sumter #17	7.4	Lexington #3	6.9	Orangeburg #7	41.7	Lee	41.53	Cherokee	206	Dorchester #3	-38.7
Spartanbu g #4	7.1	Oconee	6.8	Beaufort	41.4	Orangeburg #5	41.51	Sumter #17	204	Dorchester #1	-38.7
Spartanburg #3	7.1	York #3	6.8	Marion #2	40.9	Chester	40.73	Marlboro	202	Hampton #1	-38.3
Orangebur g #5	7.0	Spartanburg #5	6.6	Lee	39.9	Laurens #56	40.00	Spartanburg #7	201	Dorchester #2	-38.1
Newberry	6.5	Georgetown	6.5	Orangeburg #6	39.0	Edgefield	39.77	Orangeburg #5	198	Calhoun	-37.9
STATE AVI AGE	4.9	STATE AVERAGE	4.6								

1	2	3	4	5	6
School districts with highest % of 10th graders dropping out of school, 1985-1986	School districts with highest % of 11th graders dropping out of school, 1985-1986	School districts with highest percentage of 8th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the BSAP test administered in Spring, 1986	School districts with highest percentage of 10th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the field test of the exit exam in Spring, 1986	School districts with largest number of 10th grade students not meeting the reading standard on the field test of the exit exam in Spring, 1986	School districts with highest percentage of 9th grade enrollment withdrawing from school before the end of the 12th grade, 1981-1982 to 1984-1985
Fairfield	Fairfield	Fairfield	Fairfield	--	--
--	Florence #4	Florence #4	Florence #4	--	Florence #4
Orangeburg #5	--	Orangeburg #5	Orangeburg #5	Orangeburg #5	--
Orangeburg #7	--	Orangeburg #7	Orangeburg #7	--	Orangeburg #7
Florence #3	--	Florence #3	Florence #3	--	--
Dillon #3	Dillon #3	--	--	--	Dillon #3
York #3	York #3	--	--	York #3	--
Cherokee	Cherokee	--	--	Cherokee	--
Edgefield	Edgefield	--	Edgefield	--	--
	Bamberg #2	Bamberg #2	Bamberg #2	--	--
Marion #2	--	Marion #2	--	--	Marion #2
Lancaster	--	--	--	Lancaster	--
Allendale	--	--	Allendale	--	--
Spartanburg #7	--	--	--	Spartanburg #7	--
Laurens #56	--	--	Laurens #56	--	--
Greenwood #50	--	--	--	Greenwood #50	--
Dillon #2	--	Dillon #2	--	--	--
Sumter #17	--	--	--	Sumter #17	--
	Lexington #4	--	Orangeburg #3	--	Lexington #4
	Orangeburg #3	--	--	--	--
	Florence #1	--	--	Florence #1	--
	Anderson #5	--	--	Anderson #5	--
	Orangeburg #4	--	--	--	Orangeburg #4
	Chester	--	--	Chester	--
	Orangeburg #1	--	--	--	Orangeburg #1
	Georgetown	--	--	Georgetown	--
	Dorchester #2	--	--	--	Dorchester #2

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